

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ROME 005916

SIPDIS

FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

USDA/FAS FOR U/S PENN, MCHAMBLISS AND LREICH
USAID FOR A/NATSIOS, AA/EGAT ESIMMONS, AA/DCHA WINTER,
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 ROME 05916 01 OF 03 101628Z
DAA/PPC JSIMON
STATE FOR A/S IO HOLMES, A/S PRM DEWEY, U/S GLOBAL
DOBRIANSKY, IO/EDA WINNICK
NSC FOR JDWORKEN
USEU BRUSSELS FOR USAID/PLERNER
TOKYO FOR USAID REP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [AORC](#) [PREF](#) [EAGR](#) [AORC](#) [PREF](#) [EAGR](#) [AORC](#) [PREF](#) [EU](#) [WFP](#) [FAO](#) [UN](#) [EUEAID](#) [WFP](#) [FAO](#) [UN](#) [EUEAID](#) [WFP](#) [FAO](#) [UN](#)
SUBJECT: FAO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY UPDATE - "AHEAD OF THE
CURVE"

SUMMARY

1. CHRISTOPHER RITTER OF USAID'S BUREAU FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, AGRICULTURE & TRADE (EGAT) RECENTLY REVIEWED FAO'S WORLD AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION CENTRE (WAICENT) AND RELATED PROJECTS IN SETTING STANDARDS IN AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN INFORMATION MANAGEMENT FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. KEY FOCAL ISSUES WERE: MAKING SURE THE INFORMATION FAO DELIVERS IS ACTUALLY USEFUL AND ITS SUCCESS IN CONVINCING POLICY-MAKERS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT. HE CONCLUDED THAT FAO IS "AHEAD OF THE CURVE" IN COPING WITH THE PROBLEM OF AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT. MOREOVER, HE IDENTIFIED AREAS FOR POSSIBLE FAO/USAID COLLABORATION. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND - IMPROVING RURAL COMMUNICATION - INSTITUTIONS
AND PROCESSES; AND CAPACITY BUILDING
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 ROME 05916 01 OF 03 101628Z

2. CHRISTOPHER RITTER, A AAAS DIPLOMACY FELLOW WITH USAID/EGAT, RECENTLY REVIEWED FAO'S WORLD AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION CENTRE (WAICENT) AND ITS EFFORTS RELATED TO SETTING STANDARDS IN AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN INFORMATION MANAGEMENT FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

3. FAO HAS RECENTLY DEVELOPED TWO MODELS WHICH ADDRESS DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND COMMUNICATION. THE VIRTUAL EXTENSION, RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION NETWORK (VERCON) MODEL AIMS AT ENHANCING LINKAGES BETWEEN THE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION FUNCTIONS, BASED MAINLY ON IMPROVED EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION USING MODERN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICTS). THE IDEA IS TO SUPPORT DIRECT, TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FIELD EXTENSION STAFF AND RESEARCHERS WHO, IN THE EXISTING REGIME, ONLY HAVE CONTACT THAT IS MEDIATED BY HIGHER ADMINISTRATIVE LEVELS--IF THEY HAVE ANY AT ALL.

4. THE VERCON CONCEPT IS CURRENTLY BEING PILOTED IN EGYPT, WHERE CONVENTIONAL PHONE-BASED E-MAIL CONNECTIONS ARE HAVING A LARGE EFFECT IN CUTTING THROUGH LAYERS OF BUREAUCRACY TO CONNECT EXTENSIONISTS DIRECTLY, AND ESSENTIALLY FOR THE FIRST TIME, WITH RESEARCHERS AND NEW SOURCES OF AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION.

5. THE FARMER INFORMATION NETWORK (FARMNET) MODEL AIMS AT BUILDING COMMUNICATION NETWORKS BETWEEN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS THEMSELVES, OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES IN RURAL
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 ROME 05916 01 OF 03 101628Z
COMMUNITIES, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AGRICULTURAL SERVICE PROVIDERS OF MANY FORMS, AND INTERFACES WITH THE "MARKET" FOR RURAL PRODUCE. FARMNET IS MEANT TO EXPLOIT FULLY THE EXISTING COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING TELEPHONY, PRINT AND RADIO, WHILE ALSO AUGMENTING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) SELECTIVELY USING APPROPRIATE NEWER ICTS. FARMNET PILOT STUDIES ARE UNDERWAY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GOVERNMENTS IN NAMIBIA AND UGANDA. SPECIFICALLY, THE FARMNET PROJECT IN UGANDA RETAINS A FOCUS ON RADIO, BUT WILL INCLUDE E-MAIL, ALONG WITH OTHER OLDER AND NEWER ICTS TO IMPROVE WEATHER AND MARKET INFORMATION DELIVERY. LINKING VERCONS WITH FARMNETS IS AN OBVIOUS THING TO WORK ON.

6. ON CAPACITY BUILDING, FAO IS WORKING ON AN INFORMATION

MANAGEMENT RESOURCE KIT AIMED AT ADDRESSING THE DEMANDS OF ITS MEMBERS IN AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT USING MODERN ICTS. THE RESOURCE KIT CONSISTS OF A SET OF EDUCATIONAL MODULES, DELIVERED THROUGH COMPUTER-BASED DISTANCE LEARNING AND FOUR MODULES ARE IN VARIOUS STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT. THE CONTENT OF THE MODULES IS BEING DEVELOPED BY CONTRACTORS, INCLUDING CORNELL UNIVERSITY, THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN, THE TECHNICAL CENTRE FOR AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL COOPERATION IN WAGENINGEN (CTA),

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED PTQ2965

PAGE 01 ROME 05916 02 OF 03 101629Z
ACTION IO-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	COME-00	CTME-00
	WHA-00	SRPP-00	EAP-00	EB-00	EUR-00	E-00	UTED-00
	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	VCE-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OES-00
	OIC-02	OMB-01	IRM-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00
	R-00	PRM-00	SAS-00	/003W			

-----158BA7 101739Z /38

P 101453Z DEC 02
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7264
INFO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY BERN
USDA FAS WASHDC 2459
USEU BRUSSELS 2995
USMISSION GENEVA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 03 ROME 005916

SIPDIS

FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

USDA/FAS FOR U/S PENN, MCHAMBLISS AND LREICH
USAID FOR A/NATSIOS, AA/EGAT ESIMMONS, AA/DCHA WINTER,
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 ROME 05916 02 OF 03 101629Z
DAA/PPC JSIMON
STATE FOR A/S IO HOLMES, A/S PRM DEWEY, U/S GLOBAL
DOBRIANSKY, IO/EDA WINNICK
NSC FOR JDWORKEN
USEU BRUSSELS FOR USAID/PLERNER
TOKYO FOR USAID REP

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [E Aid](#) [E Agr](#) [A ORC](#) [PREF](#) [E Agr](#) [A ORC](#) [PREF](#) [E Agr](#) [A ORC](#) [PREF](#) [EU](#) [WFP](#) [FAO](#) [UN](#) [EUEAID](#) [WFP](#) [FAO](#) [UN](#) [EUEAID](#) [WFP](#) [FAO](#) [UN](#)
SUBJECT: FAO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY UPDATE - "AHEAD OF THE CURVE"

AND THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE FOR NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (ISNAR) IN THE HAGUE. FAO WORKS WITH A LOCAL INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER TO TRANSLATE CONTRACTORS' CONTENT MATERIAL INTO SELF-STRUCTURED, COMPUTER-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL UNITS APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES IN LENGTH. IN GENERAL, RITTER IS OF THE VIEW THAT FAO HAS A QUALITY PRODUCT AND A SOLID PROCESS WITH GOOD PROSPECTS FOR MAINTAINING A HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY.

17. FAO IS ALSO FACILITATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE, CALLED AGORA (ACCESS TO GLOBAL ONLINE RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURE), WHICH AIMS TO PROVIDE FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE ACCESS TO LEARNED JOURNALS IN AGRICULTURE FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. THIS IS A PROJECT THAT IS ENGAGING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR) MATTERS WITH THE GOAL OF INCREASING ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH THAT IS CURRENTLY DISSEMINATED THROUGH PROPRIETARY CHANNELS -MAINLY COPYRIGHTED JOURNALS, SUBSCRIPTIONS - WHICH ARE TOO COSTLY FOR INDIVIDUALS OR INSTITUTIONS IN MANY DEVELOPING

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 ROME 05916 02 OF 03 101629Z
COUNTRIES. THIS PROJECT BUILDS ON THE MODEL OF THE HEALTH INTERNETWORK ACCESS TO RESEARCH INITIATIVE (HINARI), AN INITIATIVE IN THE HEALTH SECTOR DEVELOPED BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO), WHICH HAS BROUGHT THE MAJOR COMMERCIAL PUBLISHERS INTO AN AGREEMENT TO PERMIT ACCESS TO SEVERAL HUNDRED JOURNALS.

THE MASSIVE JOB OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

18. FAO'S WORLD AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION CENTER (WAICENT) AIMS AT IMPROVING MEMBERS' ACCESS TO THE COLLECTION OF CONTENT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S WEBSITE AND INTRANET (PRESENTLY OVER 500,000 WEB PAGES, 100,000 FULL-TEXT

DOCUMENTS, ETC). IMPROVING ACCESS TO SUCH ENORMOUS QUANTITIES OF DIGITALLY BASED INFORMATION IS A MAJOR "TASKER" FOR ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS FAO.

9. FAO'S APPROACH TO INCREASING ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION IS THROUGH INNOVATIVE WORK IN THE TECHNOLOGY OF MANAGING HUGE AMOUNTS OF INFORMATION. THE WEAKEST PART OF WAICENT IS ITS USER INTERFACE, WHICH NEEDS WORK. TO ITS CREDIT, FAO REALIZES REFINEMENT THROUGH TESTING AMONG END USERS OUTSIDE OF FAO IS REQUIRED. HOWEVER, THE UNDERLYING DESIGN OF WAICENT IS IMPRESSIVE AND OFFERS A SOLID FOUNDATION ON WHICH TO REFINE THE PUBLIC FACE OF WAICENT. FAO IS ALSO SLOWLY COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE ULTIMATE, BUT VERY DIFFICULT TO ANSWER QUESTION: HOW WAICENT'S INFORMATION RESOURCES ARE ACTUALLY BEING USED AND WHAT IMPACT THAT USE IS HAVING ON AGRICULTURE.

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 ROME 05916 02 OF 03 101629Z

CONCLUSIONS

10. MANAGING LARGE AMOUNTS OF INFORMATION OF RADICALLY DIFFERENT TYPES - INCLUDING CONVENTIONAL PRINT SOURCES, IMAGES, STATISTICAL DATABASES, INTERACTIVE APPLICATIONS, AND MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES - IS A RELATIVELY NEW PROBLEM FOR FAO, USAID, AND ALL OTHER MAJOR DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS. ATTENTION SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO SUPPORTING THE AGENCIES THAT ARE MAKING THE BEST EFFORTS AND TAKING LESSONS FROM THEM THAT CAN BE WIDELY APPLIED TO IMPROVE WHAT EACH PLAYER IN THIS DOMAIN IS DOING.

11. IN GENERAL, FAO IS WELL PLACED TO WORK ON INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE, POLICIES AND STANDARDS.

12. ON THE FAO RESOURCES KIT, SINCE FAO HAS A QUALITY PRODUCT AND THE PROCESS THEY HAVE IN PLACE FOR PRODUCING MORE HAS GOOD PROSPECTS OF MAINTAINING THE QUALITY LEVEL, USAID AND ITS CONTRACTORS SHOULD CONSIDER PARTNERING WITH FAO TO EXPANDED USAGE OF THE RESOURCE KIT WHEREVER

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED PTQ3015

PAGE 01 ROME 05916 03 OF 03 101629Z
ACTION IO-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	COME-00	CTME-00
	WHA-00	SRPP-00	EAP-00	EB-00	EUR-00	E-00	UTED-00
	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	VCE-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OES-00
	OIC-02	OMB-01	IRM-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00
	PRM-00	SAS-00	/003W				

-----158D85 101750Z /38

P 101453Z DEC 02
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7265
INFO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY BERN
USDA FAS WASHDC 2460
USEU BRUSSELS 2996
USMISSION GENEVA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

UNCLAS SECTION 03 OF 03 ROME 005916

SIPDIS

FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 ROME 05916 03 OF 03 101629Z
USDA/FAS FOR U/S PENN, MCHAMBLISS AND LREICH
USAID FOR A/NATSIOS, AA/EGAT ESIMMONS, AA/DCHA WINTER,
DAA/PPC JSIMON
STATE FOR A/S IO HOLMES, A/S PRM DEWEY, U/S GLOBAL
DOBRIANSKY, IO/EDA WINNICK
NSC FOR JDWORKEN
USEU BRUSSELS FOR USAID/PLERNER
TOKYO FOR USAID REP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [E Aid](#) [E Agr](#) [A ORC](#) [PREF](#) [E Agr](#) [A ORC](#) [PREF](#) [E Agr](#) [A ORC](#) [PREF](#) [EU WFP](#) [FAO UN](#) [EUEAID](#) [WFP](#) [FAO UN](#) [EUEAID](#) [WFP](#) [FAO UN](#)
SUBJECT: FAO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY UPDATE - "AHEAD OF THE CURVE"

APPROPRIATE.

13. FAO WOULD WELCOME USAID'S PARTICIPATION IN AGORA. USAID COULD PROVIDE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, VALUABLE ASSISTANCE IN

DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODEL FOR AGORA.

14. LASTLY, BOTH WAICENT AND AGORA ARE IMPORTANT WORKS IN
PROGRESS THAT THIS MISSION DEEMS WORTHY OF USG SUPPORT.
HALL

UNCLASSIFIED

>
2002ROME05916 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED